

Step 2

What does an Introduction Look like?

This is the final version of an *Introduction* for a report written by a group of students after the class discussed voting as an issue of concern and developed the following research question: *Why do so few people vote in local elections?* The first draft of this *Introduction* was written by a small group of students after looking at examples like the ones in the previous resource. That draft was revised based on several rounds of comments from teachers and fellow students. We gave students sample reports that were professionally written as templates and exemplars that presented both the structure, style and language we wanted them to adopt in writing their own *Introduction*. The standard we are always aspiring to with our students is that which will enable them to get something done. When Bill received a research-memo arguing for the need for bus stop improvements in Durham from a team made up of Duke undergrads and refugee high school students, he had to tell them it wasn't good enough to send on to the transit officials we are working with. So, the students revised the memo and we were able to use it to get on the agenda of the next transit meeting. We tell our students that by holding the bar high for themselves, they will be rewarded by being taken seriously by adults. Put simply, a "high school" standard that lowers the bar on expectations, won't be compelling enough to make the community change that your student desire.

The lab is set up to meet this standard. We emphasize that young people are simply less experienced with the tools of the trade used by intelligent workers and as such, they are apprentices who will acquire the skills that professionals use, over time. In our multi-grade classes or college and high school labs newcomers contribute to the highest level of their know-

how while the teacher and more experienced students—i.e. juniors and seniors in high school and undergraduates-- work to their highest level of proficiency with research methods. The teacher is the principal researcher and is responsible for both facilitating the process of the research groups and for providing examples of polished work that can be used as models. Using a professional template, here is the introduction to a report written by tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students:

Americans are fortunate enough to have the opportunity and right to vote. Some people take this for granted, not even exercising their right at all. Some people fail to recognize that in certain countries absolute control forbids its members to hold individualistic opinions. As a government for the people and by the people it's ironic that voter turnout is so low. How can even a local government be in the best interest of the people if the community has little involvement? Such low enthusiasm in voting can only produce negative results.

It is vital to understand why people don't vote in order to change this trend around. One excuse for low voter turnout could be indifference; but it is impossible to deem that entirely responsible for such low percentage of voters. Although many may think that their one vote will not make a distinct impact on results, one vote really can make the difference. A single vote has the power to transform an outcome. It is imperative that people voice what they believe. If people are passive, they are forfeiting their authority.

Looking back at American history voting was not always a right, but a privilege only for certain people. It took hard work and dedication to make voting a lawful right for all citizens regardless of race and gender. People should almost feel obligated to vote considering the history of voting in America. If people aren't voting they lose their right to criticize their community. High voter participation is important to keep a democracy running. Think of it this

way; low-voting involvement is like a monopoly, few people controlling a large “industry”. High voting contribution is like a free market where the people are protected with choices and better quality “items”. People should want their thoughts to be voiced to ensure the best possible results. If voter turnout continues on its downward slope, it is not possible to guarantee an ideal government. These concerns have led us to study the following research question: why do so few registered people vote in local elections in Rye Town, New York? In particular, we will focus on registered voters and will examine political affiliation, income, and gender as possible variables.